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ABSTRACT

Recent years have seen a growing interest in the role of dialogue in children's learning and conception of self. Most research to date has focused on the elements and functions of classroom discourse and on adult-child or teacher-pupil conversations in educational settings. Little is known, however, about children's informal talk in which children themselves take on a leading conversational role. This paper examines a youth initiated conversation about sexual orientation, which emerged in an inner-city youth gardening program as a group of participants were busy harvesting crops. The macro-level analysis points to the kinds of positions voiced by the speakers, while the micro-level analysis examines the characteristics of the argumentation structure that emerged and its function in the dialogue. The case is made that discourse is an important tool for the construction and deconstruction of meaning and self for inner city youth, and that youth need to be provided with more opportunities to contest issues of relevance to them such as sexual orientation. (Contains 28 references.) (Author/SM)

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A Look at Youth-Initiated Dialogue in an Inner-City Gardening Program

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ABSTRACT

Recent years have seen a growing interest in the role of dialogue in children's learning and conception of self. Most research to date has focused on the elements and functions of classroom discourse, and on adult-child or teacher-pupil conversations in educational settings. Little is known, however, about children's informal talk in which children themselves take on a leading conversational role. In this paper, I examine a youth initiated conversation about sexual orientation, which emerged in an inner-city youth gardening program as a group of participants were busy harvesting crops. The macro-level analysis points to the kinds of positions voiced by the speakers, while the micro-level analysis examines the characteristics of the argumentation structure that emerged and its function in the dialogue. The case is made that discourse is an important tool for the construction and deconstruction of meaning and self for inner-city youth, and that youth need to be provided with more opportunities to contest issues of relevance to them such as sexual orientation.

Recent years have seen a growing interest in the role of dialogue in children's learning and conception of self. Most research to date has focused on the elements and functions of classroom discourse, and on adult-child or teacher-pupil conversations in educational settings (Hicks, 1996; Mercer, 1995). Little is known, however, about children's informal talk in which children themselves take on a leading conversational role (Maybin, 1993). Yet, assuming that children's interactions contribute in significant ways to their cognitive development (Göncü, 1999), research on youth initiated dialogue can provide important insights into that developmental process. Yet, classroom discourse often puts distinct boundaries on how children may contribute and hence, may undermine children's actual competence to engage in dialogue (Maybin, 1994; O'Connor & Michaels, 1996; Wells, 1999). That is, usually, knowledge in the classroom is not co-constructed in the true sense of the term where no asymmetry between students and teachers exists. Instead, in most cases, the teacher retains authority over the kind of discourse and knowledge construction that takes place in the classroom with few exceptions. For instance, Wells (1999) provides readers with Excerpts of progressive classroom discourse in which students build on each other's comments and thereby develop new understandings of scientific concepts. Yet, Well contends that "such confidence and skill in whole-class discussion is rarely seen in children of this age… and even among high school students it is the exception rather than the rule" (p. 225). I would agree with Wells, however, that "this is almost certainly not because of a lack of competence on the part of the students, but because of their lack of opportunity to exploit the competence they have" (p. 225).

These findings point to the need to examine youth initiated talk in settings that are supportive of it rather than sanction it. That led Maybin (1994) to track students' talk as it manifested itself in the students' daily activities in school. By having microphones attached to individual students, she could capture not only what happened in the classroom where student-led talk was often sanctioned, but was able to gather much student initiated talk in the hallways and other mysterious places where students hang out. Such context variations led to the emergence and identification of multiple speech genres. Despite great variety in the nature of talk, school talk like hallway talk served multiple cognitive and social purposes simultaneously. Dialogue was always a

means to position oneself, to navigate the social landscape of schooling, and to construct and deconstruct meaning, suggesting that children's spontaneous talk was not deficient from the kind necessary for educational purposes. On the contrary, youth initiated talk was a rich resource that all children had at their disposal and made use of to make meaning of the world around them.

In this paper, I examine a youth initiated conversation about sexual orientation, which emerged in an inner-city youth gardening program as a group of participants were busy harvesting crops. Unlike schools, the program did not sanction such conversations as long as youth got the gardening work accomplished. In fact, research shows that non-institutionalized educational contexts such as youth programs are often one of the few safe places for youth to explore controversial issues (Leck, 1995).

Given the recognition that "in a good conversation participants profit from their own talking..., from what others contribute, and above all from the interaction -- that is to say, from the enabling effect of each upon others" (Britton, 1970, p. 173), opportunities to discuss homosexuality are important to youth's development of self and understanding of who they are. To provide further evidence, I explore the characteristics of such talk at two levels in this paper: (1) at the macro-level, I identify the kinds of positions the speakers portray through their participation in the dialogue; and (2) at the micro-level, I examine the characteristics of the argumentation structure and its function in the dialogue.

Conceptual Framework

A dialogic perspective on discourse and learning having its roots in the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin informed this study. Accordingly, I conceived of discourse as culturally and socially situated and as mediating between the cognitive development of the individual on the one hand and that individual's cultural and historical environment on the other (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). For instance, the conversation I recorded was framed within the daily experiences of the inner-city youth and their community. Links were made between the oppression of gay people and people of color, attesting to the culturally and socially situated nature of discourse. In addition, experiences of discrimination and the need to hide that one is gay were both linked historically with those Jews

faced during the Second World War, attesting to the historically situated nature of discourse. A dialogic perspective on discourse also assumes that the conversation is structured by the interaction of the conversants, each of whom takes on a particular role. For instance, speakers' opposition to homosexuality might position them as homophobic whereas others in favor might be positioned as being gay (Unks, 1995). In line with a dialogic perspective, these markings of selves then influence the participation structure of the talk, the authority of each speaker, and the nature of the conversation that emerges (Bakhtin, 1981). This framework led me to examine youth initiated dialogue at a macro- and micro-level. Thereby I could examine more closely the work talk accomplished and gain some insights into the specific features of talk that made this exchange particularly interesting.

At the macro level, I was interested in the kinds of voices represented in the dialogue. I relied heavily on the notion of intertextuality that evolved from Bakhtin's work (see Lemke, 1995) which helps link what is being said (utterance) with the social system of heteroglossia since

> All the languages of heteroglossia... are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific worldviews, each characterized by its own objects, meanings, and values. As such they may all be juxtaposed to one another, mutually supplement one another, contradict one another, and be interrelated dialogically. (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 291-292)

Accordingly, I wanted to examine the kinds of social languages that were embedded in the utterances. Thereby I assumed that the meaning of each utterance arose in relation to what was being said and the social viewpoints it conveyed (Lemke, 1995)—the essence of Bakhtin's notion of intertextuality. I examined who was talking and whose voice was represented in the perspective taken towards sexual orientation. As noted by Bakhtin (1981), taking on voices of others also entails taking on a value position, making the use of words always a political act. This leads to my finer-grained level of analysis (or micro level analysis) that concerns itself with the argumentation structure of the dialogue.

Assuming that argumentation combines the communication of knowledge with the interpersonal goal of convincing an audience, I was interested in examining just how such was

accomplished here (Forman & Larreamendy-Joerns, 1996). Accordingly, argumentation is not seen as negative but as a tool to convey and make meaning. In addition, and as noted by Goodwin and Goodwin (1987), "argumentation gives children an opportunity to explore through productive use the structural resources of their language" (p. 226). In an argument, the stakes are high for the participants leading to the display of much quickness, skills, and inventiveness. It is for this reason, that some researchers found argumentation to be indicative of students' cognitive engagement in a task (Kuhn, Shaw, and Felton, 1997). Argumentation also entails the incorporation of many forms of speech, such as requests, commands, insults, explanations, excuses, threats and warnings. Hence, arguments entail actions that make it possible for participants to practice diverse occasion-specific social identities, such as accuser-defendant (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987; 1990). Maybe not surprisingly then, some researchers have found children's autonomous collective discourse to be of higher cognitive level than when mediated by the teacher (Kuhn et al., 1997; Pontecorvo & Girardet, 1993). Given these findings, it can be assumed that the dialogue under study here provided youth with more than the mere transmission of new ideas. Instead, the dialogue may have served as a context in which to practice argumentation skills leading to the formation of new links and questions, and directing participants' thinking in new unanticipated directions while providing for new content leading to new arguments.

Setting, Participants, and Procedures

The conversation I examine in this paper comes from a larger qualitative case study of an inner-city youth gardening program -- City Farmers -- conducted in the summer of 1996. The goal of the study was to examine the meaning of science in such a program, the way discourse contributed to that meaning, and how such a meaning became negotiated and challenged by participants' notions of science (Rahm, 1998). An ethnographically informed discourse analysis guided the design of the case study allowing for the simultaneous examination of the community of practice and the discourse crafted in a social setting.

In the City Farmers program, youth were in charge of growing, harvesting and marketing herbs, flowers, and some vegetables. Participants received an hourly stipend for their work which

also lend itself to the teaching of work ethics and life skills. While much science could be learned through participation in the program, the program also became an important site for the construction and negotiation of selves. It was a safe place to contest issues of central concern to inner-city youth such as what it means to be gay, the focus of this paper.

Twenty-three youth (twenty-one African American, two European American; eight female and fifteen male), ranging in age from eleven to fifteen years, participated in the City Farmers program along with four adult team leaders, two master gardeners, and the program director. In this paper, I focus on a conversation that emerged among three City Farmers -- Andrew, Marvin and Sula -- as they were harvesting basil as a team. Andrew, a thirteen year old European-American, was described by the team leaders as a participant who "daydreamed" and "drifted" too much and never seemed to complete the tasks assigned. Marvin, a fourteen year old African-American, also struggled with staying on task if not supervised but "showed initiative in finding other things to do besides work." Sula, a fifteen year old African-American, was always busy talking about issues of her life with team leaders and friends, sometimes as a way to get away with as little gardening work as possible. When asked directly, all three youth described the program as "fun" and as providing them with opportunities to gather valuable entrepreneur and gardening skills.

I was in the garden with my video camera as the conversation emerged. At the beginning of the conversation, Sula asked me about what I thought of gay people while Andrew and Marvin were already engaged in a discussion about the subject. Sula then joined their conversation and I was no longer involved other than as a listener. For the most part, the video camera, positioned in the back, did not seem to interfere with the conversation (Jordan & Henderson, 1995). Only when curses were used by Andrew, Marvin reminded him that the camera was on, to which he replied, "who cares!" It also became clear that the conversation captured had been ongoing and was not particular to this specific day. I just happened to capture that part of it. Accordingly, it can be assumed that the conversation was not staged for the video camera.

The whole conversation was transcribed verbatim and integrated with the fieldnotes collected that day. I then pursued a macro analysis which entailed the identification of patterns of text-

semantics (Lemke, 1995). Through numerous re-readings of the transcripts, I tried to identify the voices and values embedded in the positions taken by each speaker. As noted by Lemke (1995), I could deduce such positions not solely by the discourse alone, but in the context of the social and political relations such talk subsumed. Accordingly, I focused on three meanings simultaneously: (1) presentational (how things are in natural and social world as apparent through description of it), (2) orientational (orientation taken to addresses and audiences), and (3) organizational (elements/structure of talk that make it meaningful). This led to an identification of stances taken towards the issue of sexual orientation by the three speakers.

The micro-analysis — with a focus on the argumentation structure – was pursued to support the interpretations made at the macro-level, and to gain deeper insights into the making and challenging of the positions identified. Accordingly, I focused on the kinds of arguments speakers put forth and the ways such arguments influenced the scope of the conversation (Kuhn et al., 1997). In particular, I used Toulmin's method of argument analysis, which differentiates between claims, data, warrants and backings. The claim refers to the "conclusion whose merits we are seeking to establish" (Toulmin, 1969, p. 97). To do so, we may appeal to *data* or facts, which provide the foundation for the claim. If the data itself is challenged the data may become claims until their status as facts is accepted or rejected. *Warrants* are utterances that lend support for the relation between the facts or data and the claim under contention, and hence, support their relevance. In Toulmin's words, "our task is no longer to strengthen the ground on which our argument is constructed, but is rather to show that, taking these data as a starting point, the step to the original claim or conclusion is an appropriate and legitimate one" (p. 98). Finally, backings of an argument strengthen the acceptability of warrants or put differently, provide a frame within which warrants are valid. That is, backings of warrants also lend support for the relation between the data and the claims. Finally, the selection of specific grounds, warrants, and backings depends upon the social context in which an argument emerges (Krummheuer, 1995). The kinds of grounds, warrants, and backings that make the same argument convincing in one setting or one dispute may vary from another. Hence, the practice of argumentation is best thought of as context specific. Warrants may be convincing in one

context and not another, depending on the audience and the time at which it emerges in the actual dialogue, assuming that the dialogue itself is continuously evolving given its social constitution. In this report, I combined the warrants and backings given my primary focus on how claims and counter-claims were put forth.

The Excerpts chosen for this paper are representative of the kind of argumentation structures that were prevalent in the whole data set. The original order of talk is maintained to some degree in this paper by the presentational sequence of the Excerpts (first one from beginning of discussion, etc.). Note that this exchange occurred in 1996, when the implications of Amendment 2 were debated and prior to the Shepard case.

RESULTS

Macro-Level Analysis: Multiple Voices and Their Role in Positioning the Speakers

The conversation was typical of adult talk in that it consisted of at least two "texts" each belonging to different social communities that perceive each other in opposition given their social interests and viewpoints (Lemke, 1995): (1) the Christian fundamentalist group that perceives homosexuality as sinful and tends to portray the view of sex as a reproductive act and hence, homosexuality as abnormal (Sula & Marvin); and (2) the gay activist who opposes the other views and the attempts at transforming such views into law (Andrew). For instance, Andrew tried to convince his friends that "homosexuals are people just like us" and that "we need to accept them as they are." In contrast, Marvin quoted the bible in support of his claim that being gay is not natural. Sula seemed to side with Marvin's argument yet maintained that being gay is a choice, but a choice that was not compatible with her own religious beliefs: "I never had a problem with gay people, I am just saying I have a problem with being gay, I am not gay, I will never go that way because that is just not for me... now for you that might be your choice." Note how Sula's utterance also marks a sophisticated distinction between a person and a behavior. Her statement "I never had a problem with gay people" suggests that at a personal level, she would never discriminate against gay people. At the same time, her self-identification as not being gay and never wanting to or choosing to become gay since it "is just not for me" suggests that she struggles with gay behavior or a gay

lifestyle, something that is just beyond her imagination. Accordingly, her utterance is multilayered and conveys particular values and positions that are set and like Andrew's, did not evolve further despite the dialogue that followed. In contrast, Marvin's talk conveys a more ambiguous position on the same issue. For him, the conversation was a tool "to negotiate the complex relationship between individual purposes and cultural authority" (Maybin, 1994, p. 148). That is apparent in his persistence on addressing and re-addressing the issue of whether being gay is normal despite numerous interruptions and shifts in the content of talk. In contrast, Andrew's talk positioned him as a gay activist who was very knowledgeable about the issues raised against the gay community, as is apparent in the exchange below:

Excerpt 1

1	Marvin:	Well, you have to at least admit that it's not natural to be gay.
2	Andrew:	How is it not natural?
3	Marvin:	I mean, well, seriously, look at it this way, I mean, if, if it was natural
4		then...
5	Andrew:	... then who made them to be that way...
6	Marvin:	No, just listen, if it was natural for people to be gay, then there would
7		be much more bisexual people around if it was natural to be gay,
8		seriously, I mean, think about
9	Andrew:	NO! It's... I bet there are a lot more bisexual people then you know, but
10		they hide in the closet. They say I am gonna pretend, to be straight, so
11		I'm not gonna get into trouble.

Note how Marvin was able, with little effort, to complete the argument raised by Marvin in lines 3-4, by adding, "then who made them to be that way" (line 5), and thereby positioned himself as an expert on gay issues. Only after Marvin challenged him further (lines 6-8) did Andrew become somewhat agitated, noting, "I bet there are a lot more bisexual people then you know, but they hide in the closet" (lines 9-10). The terms "hide in the closet" are reflective of a speech genre associated with disputes about gay issues. Similarly, the use of terms such as "to be straight" indicate Andrew's familiarity with the speech genre of the gay activist. Throughout the whole dispute, only Andrew's talk was marked by such terms. The ease in which Andrew invoked those terms and obviously had made them his own suggests that he had taken part in such disputes before.

Hence, the three speakers brought to the situation different intertexts, spoke with different discourse voices and listened with different discourse dispositions (Lemke, 1995). The latter is particularly striking as we examine the speakers' interpretation of the bible and its stance towards being gay, as is apparent in the following dialogue:

Excerpt 2

1	Andrew:	So where in the Bible does it say that gay is bad?
2	Sula:	It never actually says oh, these gays are bad...
3	Marvin:	Yeah, it says that homosexuals.. . it says women.. women should not
4	Sula:	It doesn't say, just come out and say gay is bad because if you [unclear]
5	Marvin:	...is happy[unclear] ... well it says, it says in the bible because we
6		were looking at this a couple of nights ago, it says, mmh, men should
7		not seek men and women not with women, and men not with beast.
8	Sula:	Exactly.
9	Marvin:	That's what it says.
10	Sula:	I mean it doesn't just come out and say but that's what it means.
11	Andrew:	But God teaches to accept everyone.
12	Sula:	OK. But I never said...
13	Marvin:	...but it says in black and white...
14	Sula:	... I never said that I have a problem with gay people, I am just
15		saying I have a problem with being gay. I am not gay. I will never go
16		that way because that is just not me. It doesn't feel right for me. Now
17		for you that may be your choice. But as far as I am... I would never
18		choose that.
19	Andrew:	I am just saying it's OK.
20	Sula:	Well, I am not saying that's [lots of noise]... It may be OK in your
21		state of mind, but where I come from, being gay is just like the
22		lowest...
23	Marvin:	That's wrong.
24	Sula:	[lots of noise, missing data] ... where I came from, I mean gay people,
25		I mean everybody has a different background...
26	Marvin:	... but gay people are still humans you shouldn't like judge them or
27		anything, the are still humans....

Note how the three speakers differ in their reading of the bible supporting Bakhtin's notion of dialogicality (Bakhtin, 1981). Marvin seemed to agree that the bible conveys the message "gay is bad" (line 4). He supported his argument with a quote from the bible (lines5-7). In contrast, Sula tried to differentiate the words in the bible from the meaning of it by noting that the bible never explicitly states "gay is bad" (line 4) yet essentially seems to send that message in the quote read by Marvin. Sula then further distanced herself from the bible talk by noting the stance taken by her family and religion (lines 14-18). Thereby, Sula's comment foregrounds Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia in that she spoke in a specific social language about being gay, a discourse type

particular to the community she was part of (home, religious group). Marvin brought yet another intertext to bear as is evident in his reaction to Sula's challenge by noting "that's wrong" (line 23) and by stating that "gay people are still humans you shouldn't like judge them or anything" (line 26-27). At the same time, Marvin's reaction might follow from his stance towards the bible and his acknowledgement of Andrew's statement that "God teaches to accept everyone" (line 11). Hence, even though each speaker was forced to take sides in the dialogue, these sides emerged in relation to the opposition.

To make meaning of the discourse, all speakers did so in relation to different sets of intertexts. That is, Sula seemed to conclude that "she does not have a problem with gay people" (line 14) but "a problem with being gay" (line 15). Thereby, she underlined a difference between a belief and a behavior. Sula began by noting "I never said I have a problem with gay people" (line 14) suggesting that she does not necessarily believe that being gay is bad. Yet, according to Sula, to act gay may need to be regulated since in her community "being gay is just like the lowest" (line 21-22). Sula's argument is not uncommon and reflective of the First Amendment in that she has the right to *believe* what she wants yet not the right to *behave* in just any way she wants. The distinction between belief and behavior was also made in a school board dispute surrounding the re-writing of a non-discrimination statement which was to include sexual orientation, something that was highly opposed by many parents and some board members (Tracy & Ashcraft, 2000).

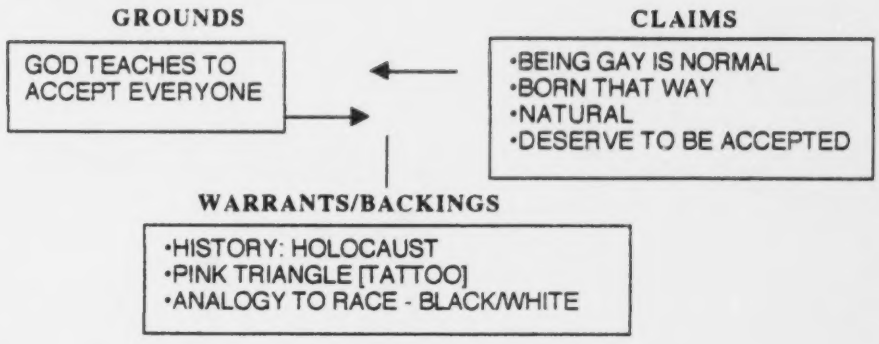
Micro-Level Analysis: Examination of the Argumentation Structure

My previous analysis already provided some insights into the kinds of social languages or social identities present in oppositional exchanges, a neglected area of research according to Goodwin and Goodwin (1990). In fact, social languages became essential tools for participation in the dispute. The analysis of the argumentation structure (Toulmin, 1969) lend further support for the already identified positions of the participants in the dialogue. As noted by Goodwin and Goodwin (1990), "the talk of the moment constitutes who is present to it (i.e., how what is said in a given turn can make relevant particular social identities)" (p. 85).

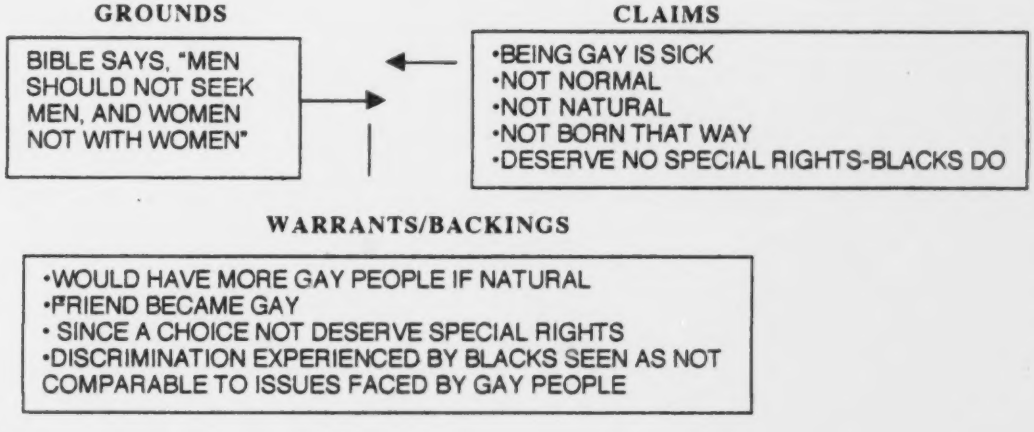
Figure 1 summarizes the claims, grounds, and warrants/backings that could be identified for the three speakers in the whole one hour exchange that was recorded. I have compiled warrants and backings into one category here for simplification. Note again, how Andrew's line of reasoning positioned him as a gay activist whereas Marvin's counter-arguments positioned him as a Christian Fundamentalist. At the same time, Sula's line of reasoning seemed to position her somewhere in between. While making a clear distinction between behavior and being, she personified her argument by noting that "I am not gay and will never go that way" and by discussing her actions if she would have a child who would turn gay. Like Marvin, she perceived being gay a choice, and a choice she might be able to respect to some degree "since people do what they want to do anyway." However, she could only accept it as long as it did not involve her at a personal level (being her own child). Accordingly, her personification of her stance made it possible to distance herself from Marvin's claims and made it possible for her to take sides with some of Andrew's claims such as the need to accept gay people and to treat them as normal people.

Figure 1 also underlines issues of race that became part of the discussion. In particular, Marvin and Sula struggled with Andrew's recurrent focus on discrimination of gay people. Both challenged Andrew on that line of reasoning. They seemed to suggest that only black people can truly understand what discrimination means and speak for that term. I considered such a shift in focus from gay rights to discrimination as a content shift rather than topic shift, since an underlying coherence in the argument was maintained (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1990). That is, some disputes led to a discussion of "other content" yet they were not disjunctive with the overall talk since there was an underlying coherence across the separate turns.

ANDREW'S ARGUMENT



MARVIN'S ARGUMENT


GROUNDS
CLAIMS
BIBLE SAYS, "MEN SHOULD NOT SEEK MEN, AND WOMEN NOT WITH WOMEN"
•BEING GAY IS SICK
•NOT NORMAL
•NOT NATURAL
•NOT BORN THAT WAY
•DESERVE NO SPECIAL RIGHTS-BLACKS DO
WARRANTS/BACKINGS
•WOULD HAVE MORE GAY PEOPLE IF NATURAL
•FRIEND BECAME GAY
• SINCE A CHOICE NOT DESERVE SPECIAL RIGHTS
•DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCED BY BLACKS SEEN AS NOT COMPARABLE TO ISSUES FACED BY GAY PEOPLE

SULA'S ARGUMENT

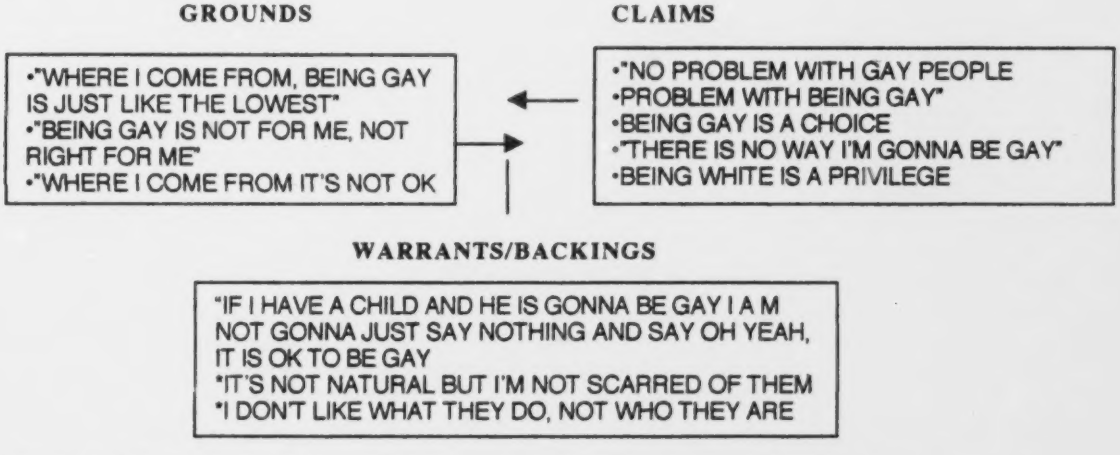

GROUNDS
CLAIMS
•"WHERE I COME FROM, BEING GAY IS JUST LIKE THE LOWEST"
•"BEING GAY IS NOT FOR ME, NOT RIGHT FOR ME"
•"WHERE I COME FROM IT'S NOT OK
•"NO PROBLEM WITH GAY PEOPLE
•PROBLEM WITH BEING GAY"
•BEING GAY IS A CHOICE
•"THERE IS NO WAY I'M GONNA BE GAY"
•BEING WHITE IS A PRIVILEGE
WARRANTS/BACKINGS
"IF I HAVE A CHILD AND HE IS GONNA BE GAY I A M NOT GONNA JUST SAY NOTHING AND SAY OH YEAH, IT IS OK TO BE GAY
"IT'S NOT NATURAL BUT I'M NOT SCARRED OF THEM
"I DON'T LIKE WHAT THEY DO, NOT WHO THEY ARE

Figure 1. Schematic Depiction of the Argumentation Structures of Two Speakers

The following Excerpt illustrates some content shifts as the treatment of minority groups in the past was discussed:

Excerpt 3

		Dialogue	*Argumentative Operation*
1	Andrew:	OK. In the holocaust, they just killed gays.	Claim
2	Marvin:	They didn't kill gays, they killed Jewish people.	Opposition
4	Andrew:	Yeah, they killed Jewish people and gays...	Counteropposition
6	Marvin:	Anybody that wasn't blond eyed and blue haired or whatever	Grounds
8	Andrew:	Yeah, the killed gypsies, they killed homosexuals...	Grounds
10	Marvin:	Anybody that wasn't ....genocide or whatever they called it...	Warrants
12	Andrew:	No, they...	Opposition Attempt
13	Marvin:	Hitler's ideas worked...	Warrants
14	Andrew:	Hitler was [hard to hear]	Opposition Attempt
15	Sula:	But you know what, Hitler was stupid, just because I am blonder, and I have blue eyes and you have blue eyes does not necessarily mean that our offspring is gonna have blue eyes.	CONTENT SHIFT
20	Marvin:	Yeah. They can have brown eyes, yeah, I know...	" " "
22	Sula:	So you know what I am saying. That means that he would have to kill 95% of the population or a half of it just so he has...	" " "
25	Marvin:	He would have to kill the majority of it...	" " "
26	Sula:	Yes.	" " "
27	Marvin:	...just pureness, yeah.	" " "
28	Andrew:	Well, you see, you know, do you know what the pink triangle is? It's the sign of homosexuals.	Ground For Initial Claim in Line 1
31	Marvin:	Yeah, the one with the rainbow in the middle?	Confirmation of Ground
33	Andrew:	Yeah. First it was the pink triangle because in the holocaust they tattooed the pink triangle on homosexuals and then sent them to the camps and killed them. I mean homosexual is.... homosexuals have always been just shunned from society, always.	Warrants/Backings
40	Sula:	But it's, you know what I'm saying, it's different and it takes people a long time to accept it.	Concession

In this exchange, Andrew provided Marvin and Sula with additional information about the treatment of homosexuals in the past. He began with a claim that "in the holocaust, they just killed gays" which was being challenged by Marvin who noted that "they killed Jewish people" and not gays. Given that counteropposition, Andrew re-worded his initial claim in ways that integrated the issues raised so far (lines 4-5). He reinforced that point in yet another extension of his claim in lines 8-9 as he noted, "they killed gypsies, the killed homosexuals." Subsequently, Andrew tried to add further information to his line of reasoning (lines 12 & 14) but lost the floor to Marvin and Sula who were invested in a discussion of Hitler's quest for "pureness." The shift from talk about the treatment of gay people during the holocaust to Hitler's approach of creating pureness illustrates a content shift. Note, however, how Marvin's comment (line 28) re-directed the discussion to the initial topic, suggesting some continuity with the initial argument despite the identified change in content. Andrew did so eloquently by posing a knowledge question, "do you know what the pink triangle is – a question that seemed to function as a claim given the addition that "it's the sign of homosexuals" (lines 28-30).

Through closer examination of the claims put forth, it became clear that Andrew was an expert on gay issues. In particular, it appeared that Sula and Marvin had little knowledge about the treatment of gays during the holocaust. Maybe Sula initiated a topic change to cover up her own lack of knowledge about the issue. Andrew seemed primarily bored by that exchange and attempted to re-direct the discussion to the treatment of gays during the war by discussing the role of the pink triangle. Thereby he also provided his peers with new knowledge. Note how Andrew was not only knowledgeable in terms of facts, but also well versed in the terminology typically used in gay talk. For instance, in line 38, he noted that "homosexuals have always been just shunned from society." The term "shunned" marked his familiarity with the speech genre of gay activists and positioned him as such a member, as was already alluded to earlier. In effect, only Andrew used such terms.

Concessions also provided important insights into the dynamics of argumentation. In Excerpt 3, Sula's concession (lines 40-42) provided evidence for the fact that she sided with Andrew's call for the acceptance of gay people. By noting, "it takes people a long time to accept

it," however, she also excused her own struggles with such a line of reasoning. Accordingly, the concession might have been somewhat self-serving. This concession came as a surprise, however, since Sula seemed more invested in the dialogue about Hitler than in the talk about gay rights. It remains curious what gave rise to her concession.

As one examines the kinds of concessions in the whole transcripts, it becomes clear, that Sula and Marvin were the only two making concessions. Andrew never changed his mind on any issue and remained unchallenged by the arguments put forth. Accordingly, for Andrew, the exchange became a way to simply repeat his position by sharing much political, social and historical support. In contrast, for Marvin and Sula, at times it might have been safer to agree with Andrew to save their relationship with him (Lampert, Rittenhouse, & Crumbaugh, 1996). Closer examination of concessions suggests some of that relationship saving at work for Marvin. For instance, after much debate about whether being gay is natural -- an issue that seemed problematic to Marvin since it that would mean that they cannot donate -- Marvin suddenly sided with Andrew (so he thought) by noting, "I just think it is not natural... but they are just people like you and me, they just have an alternative lifestyle." However, that concession of sorts, was challenged by Andrew who now accused Marvin of simply making excuses for the behavior of gay people. Many of Marvin's concessions were challenged by Andrew, and led to further argumentation and confrontation. In contrast, Sula's concessions seemed indicative of true agreement rather than of face saving work. For instance, as they discussed the statement in the bible (Excerpt 2), Sula made the concession that maybe, at the time the bible was written, no gay people existed, and that it might be an issue we only have to deal with now. In general, Sula's concessions served a different function from Marvin's and remained unchallenged by the other speakers. That finding may suggest that both Sula and Andrew had taken a position towards sexual orientation, a position they were ready to defend, while Marvin was still struggling with his own stance towards the issue.

The issue of discrimination surfaced again towards the end of the transcript -- a content shift from discrimination of gay people to a focus on discrimination of black people. Interestingly, Andrew initiated this discussion, which was most likely not a coincidence. By recycling the issue of

discrimination – in the context of something that the other speakers experience daily – Andrew might have tried to be even more convincing. That is, such a framing of the issue may have promoted a more reciprocal display of the opposer's expertise than the previous instance of discrimination in the context of the holocaust. In doing so, I show that "in analyzing opposition it is not sufficient to focus exclusively on the talk through which opposition is done; one must also take into account how actors are portrayed and constituted through that talk" (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987, p. 210). The following dialogue emerged after the discussion of the holocaust:

Excerpt 4

		Dialogue	*Argumentative Operation*
1	Andrew:	Well, I have heard black people that say,	Claim – part 1
2		I am black so...	
3	Marvin:	[interrupts him] African Americans.	
4	Andrew:	African Americans and Hispanic people	Claim – part 2
5		who say I am better than you because I am	
6		Mexican.	
7	Sula:	Well, that may be, but you know what I am	Grounds for Opposition
8		saying, you have better....	
9	Marvin:	That's easy to say, like I am better than	Grounds for Opposition
10		you because I am white.	
11	Sula:	...look at it this way, if you think, if you	Grounds for Opposition
12		watch talk shows, if you watch TV... what	
13		they did to this one... well he was a white	
14		male and they sent him into this real	
15		expensive store and they, you know, they	
16		told him to go for all the expensive stuff,	
17		the eighty dollar ties and the hundred	
18		dollar shirts, go for it, and for the three	
19		thousand dollar shoes, go for that	
20		expensive stuff, and then, they brought	
21		him back out, they got him black gloves	
22		and they put so much make-up on him that	
23		he looked brown, he said when he went	
24		back into that store, the men that helped	
25		him before wouldn't even look at him just	
26		because of the color of his skin.	
27	Marvin:	Yeah, that's wrong.	Concession/Support
28	Sula:	So, you know, what I'm saying. If you think	Opposition
29		about it, it is really a privilege to you to be	
30		white!	
31	Marvin:	Yeah, that's right!	Concession/Support
32	Andrew:	Well it is kind of not a privilege because I	Counteropposition
33		live in a black neighborhood.	

34	Sula:	No, but I am saying, if you were to, if you	Warrants/Backings
35		were to walk into Dillards or something,	
36		just because that is a high price store, you	
37		would no matter what... even if I had more	
38		money than you ... you would still be better	
39		treated.	
40	Andrew:	If I walked into that hairdresser over	Warrants/Backings
41		there, she wouldn't even look at me would	
42		she?	
43		[Marvin tries to interrupt]	
44	Sula:	She would look at you but she would be	Warrants/Backings
45		kind of like, what is he doing here?	
46	Marvin:	OK. Shhhh. Look at this. I mean...	New Claim
47		Think back in the past, wait, think about	
48		in the past, about how black people were	
49		being treated by you know, white people. I	
50		mean, I have a lot of white friends... and I	
51		live in a white neighborhood....	
52		[some data missing]	
53	Andrew:	OK. Now think of how homosexuals have	New Opposition
54		been treated, throughout history they	
55		have just been shunned from society and	
56		made fun of, and teased, and killed ...	
57	Sula:	Oh, so you are trying to say that just	Elaboration on
58		because they are homosexuals then they	Opposition
59		are so much to the point they don't believe	
60		the same things we believe and that they	
61		should be treated better than....	
62	Andrew:	NO!	Rejection of Elaboration
63	Sula:	.. than African American people?	
64	Andrew:	NO, I am not saying they should be treated	New Claim
65		better than anyone. I am just saying.... they	
66		should be ACCEPTED.	

Here, Andrew began a new cycle of argumentation by putting forth a blunt claim about racial tensions (lines 1-6). Given such a framing the dialogue became racially charged rather quickly. It led to the right kind of context for Sula to challenge Andrew about his skin color by noting that "it's really a privilege to you to be white" (lines 28-30). Andrew was quick, however, to point out that "it is kind of not a privilege because I live in a black neighborhood" (lines 32-33). This escalation in talk provides further information about the positions of the speakers in this dialogue. Andrew was now challenged about his stance towards homosexuality and the fact that he is white. In some sense, Sula put into question Andrews recurrent talk about discrimination and acceptance

when he himself, as a white person, was responsible for the oppression of black people and never experienced discrimination at the level they had.

Sula's charge was lost, however, once Marvin initiated a content shift in the middle of the debate, by re- focusing the conversation on the role of discrimination of blacks in the past (line 46). This might be illustrative of yet another instance of face saving by Marvin. It appears as such given Marvin's emphasis on the time he spends with white friends and the fact that he lives in a white neighborhood (lines 50-52), thereby aligning himself with Andrew despite their differences in skin color. This content shift provided a context for Andrew to regain the floor by proposing a new opposition that followed nicely from the initial claim about discrimination in history (lines 53-56). That content shift helped resolve the racial tension that started to build up among the speakers. Note, however, that Sula was not done with her argument and further challenged Andrew by questioning who was to deserve special rights, blacks or gays (lines 57-61) which in some sense came across as 'her or him.' Andrew tried to avoid further confrontation, however, by proposing a somewhat revised claim -- that gays should be "accepted" (lines 64-66).

These exchanges are insightful into the struggles youth face as they are confronted with racial and sexual identification work. For the most part, the speakers seemed to distance themselves from their ethnic identity and struggled with the issue of sexual identity. However, as the argument became charged, and given the parallel between their line of argumentation in the context of gay rights and racial rights, it is not surprising, that their own identity as white or black became an issue of contention -- a nice example of how actors are constituted by talk (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987).

Clearly, through the recycling of the theme of discrimination throughout the whole exchange, the contradictions between the speakers could be maintained. At the same time, the concessions and content shifts suggest that the dialogue was not simply a means to convey to others ones' position on the issue, but to deconstruct the sources of knowledge and beliefs these positions entailed. It is in this way that discourse became a tool to make meaning of what it meant to be gay and hence, of self. Such talk broadened the speakers' understanding of the two opposing positions and also mediated City Farmers' development of an identity of themselves in relation to

homosexuality. And as the last Excerpt made clear, such talk also helped youth to negotiate their ethnic identities in new ways.

Educational Implications

As noted by Kuhn et al. (1997), in order to "get someone to think better -- more deeply, more thoroughly, more rigorously -- about an issue, we should get them engaged in thinking about it" (p. 287). Through talk, positions towards controversial issues can be collaboratively explored and contested, as was shown here. In particular, the level of sophistication in the argumentation structure and youth's ability to articulate their own ways of thinking about such a controversial issue without adult guidance was striking. It suggests that an examination of youths' spontaneous dialogue could provide important insights into the development of mind and personhood (or identity; Maybin, 1994). A textual analysis can also provide a means to understand how other people's voices and positions are appropriated and contested by youth (Maybin, 1993; Lemke, 1995). Andrew had appropriated the voice of the gay activist, while Marvin and Sula seemed to side with arguments of the Christian fundamentalists. The dialogue also provided opportunities to voice youth's stance on race. As noted by Maybin (1994):

> Language is a resource for making meaning, but it is not a neutral one. Language choices bring with them particular values and positions, so that individuals are inducted into cultural practices. The provisionality and ambiguity of informal talk helps children to negotiate the complex relationship between individual purposes and cultural practices. The provisionality and ambiguity of informal talk helps children to negotiate the complex relationship between individual purposes and cultural authority, and to develop their own personal identities. (p. 148)

As the Excerpts make clear, the speakers negotiated and developed an understanding of self by speaking the voices of others. Their talk was marked by complex arguments that were two sided and entailed diverse content shifts, characteristics also attesting to the cognitive investment of the speakers in the dialogue (Kuhn et al., 1997). Additional work needs to address in greater detail the role of affect in argumentation as well as facial expressions and gestures. For instance, Andrew showed few hand gestures and was rather calm throughout most of the exchange whereas Marvin used hands, face and affect to support his stance on the issue. Such non-linguistic markers certainly did much work in this dialogue which has not been taken into account yet, but could make

interpretations of the dialogue more convincing. An analysis of non-linguistic signs could also make apparent another layer of work central to effective argumentation.

Apart from the actual function of talk, it has to be noted that it might not be an accident that the City Farmers program was a safe place for a conversation about sexual identity to occur. Research suggests that given the homophobic climate of schools and often also families, gay, lesbian or bisexual youth programs are crucial places for teens to talk about life-relevant issues that are deemed too controversial by educational authorities (Friend, 1991; Heath & McLaughlin, 1994; Uribe, 1995). As this analysis indicates, such conversations are of educational importance and need to become part of multiple educational contexts, schools included. However, we first have to acknowledge that schools are not only there to teach academic matters but instead, are places for the education of the whole person (i.e., academics and selves). As noted by Leck (1995), in the absence of public discourse, youth struggling with their own sexual identity might be vulnerable to private influences which are often not representative of the whole array of positions on an issue and hence, might be detrimental to a child's development. As shown here, this exchange provided an opportunity to Marvin, Sula, and Andrew to examine and contest oppositional arguments and to re-examine their own stance on the issue.

Clearly, discourse is an important tool for the construction and deconstruction of meaning. Examination of children's spontaneous dialogue can also provide important insights into the social and cultural development of the mind as was noted years ago by Vygotsky. In particular, by examining discourse in terms of "who says what when, why, and with what effect" (Lemke, 1995, p. 21), the social context of children's spontaneous dialogue and its action might be better understood. Such an analysis can provide insights richer in detail than those provided by any other source and can lead to a better understanding of children's own contributions to their development in context.

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